

Is Your Blade Sharp Enough?

Can you imagine having an extended conversation with not just any angel, but one of the higher-ranking angels of God?

Suppose that angel came to you and told you of kingdoms that would rise and fall in coming years, even explaining what principalities would manipulate those leaders and how alliances would form and be crushed as new kings rose to power. I'd be willing to give up a Twinkie or a T-bone steak for a few weeks in order to have my spirit open enough to receive such a visitation!

Of course, I'm talking about Daniel, the faithful man of God who was held captive in Babylon for most of his life. After Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and took captives back to Babylon, he had the best and brightest of the young men set apart. They were to be trained for three years in the ways of the Chaldeans to eventually become his personal assistants. Daniel was among those selected, along with his three friends whom we have come to know by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego.

Early on, Daniel and his friends set themselves apart from the others by refusing to defile themselves with the foods laid out for them on the king's table.

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Notice that by simply taking such a stand, "God granted Daniel favor and compassion in the sight of the commander of the officials," (Dan. 1:9, NASU). Daniel explained that he and his friends would be in better shape after 10 days of eating only vegetables and drinking only water than the others would be after eating the king's delicacies. The overseer continued giving them only their requested vegetables and water: "God gave them knowledge and intelligence in every branch of

literature and wisdom; Daniel even understood all kinds of visions and dreams," (Dan. 1:17, NASU).

Daniel rose to positions of great responsibility within the kingdom of Babylon, even under subsequent rulers. In chapter 10, Daniel, then close to 90 years old, received a message of great conflict and a vision, both of which he did not understand. Apparently troubled, he recorded, "In those days I, Daniel, was mourning three full weeks. I ate no pleasant food, no meat or wine came into my mouth," (Dan. 10:2–3). The Hebrew word used here for "pleasant food" is *lechem*, or breads. So for 21 days, Daniel fasted all sweets, breads and meats, and drank only water.

It was soon after that fast when Daniel's encounter with the angel of God took place along the Tigris River. Notice something very encouraging in what the angel told Daniel: his prayers had been heard in heaven from the very first day he started the fast (Dan. 10:12)! The only reason the angel had not appeared to Daniel sooner was because he was fighting with the principality of Persia (modern-day Iran).

Dull but Comfortable

Of the many different types of fasts that are acceptable, what has come to be called the Daniel fast is probably one of the more common—and with good reason. It is one of the personal fasts recorded in the Bible that brought with it great favor from the Lord. For 21 days, you eat only vegetables and fruits and drink only water. No colas, burgers, Twinkies, meats, sweets or bread.

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Moses fasted. Elijah fasted 40 days. Paul fasted 14 days. Jesus fasted 40 days. If the children of God do not fast, how will we ever fit into the armor of God? How will we

effectively wield the sword of the Spirit?

I want you to understand something: fasting and prayer sharpen the blade, which is the Word of God.

When you fast, mealtimes often become study times. You become more keyed in to God's Word, and God begins to show you deeper truths. It wasn't after finishing off a bag of chocolate-covered doughnuts that Daniel got the visit from the angel. Daniel began to understand God's truths after fasting and getting alone with Him. Understanding comes from the study of God's Word!

Many Christians have just stopped fighting all together because they are battered and bruised or using dull blades to fight demonic powers. When you fast and pray, you effectively sharpen the Word in your mouth. Instead of flippantly quoting Scripture, you now wield a powerful weapon with a razor-sharp edge that slashes the enemy when you speak.{eo}

To learn more about the spiritual impact fasting has on your life, click here!

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